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Semiarid Lands in Our Great Plains

by Donald R. Murphy

Vice Chairman of the NPA Agriculture Committee; Director, Editorial Research of *Wallaces Farmer*

WHAT WOULD WE DO, as a nation, if we could start over again to handle the semiarid lands of the western Great Plains? Let us suppose it is 1846. No plows have come west of the Missouri, except in the Mexican colonies in New Mexico and California. Outside of these areas, the only cattle are the oxen that pull the wagons to Santa Fe or to Oregon. The only dust storms are the product, not of overgrazing by cattle or plowing for wheat, but of overgrazing by buffalo, of prairie fires set by lightning or Indians, and of the recurring, unpredictable cycles of rain and drought.

Picture the western plains thus and imagine that to the physical situation of 1846, we could add our present knowledge about land classification and soil conservation. Given the opportunities of 1846 and the knowledge of 1959, what would be our national policy in handling land in this area? This may be a helpful way of approaching a problem that is difficult, important, and terrifying.

What territory are we thinking about? Except in those spots where irrigation is possible, we must classify as desert, the land where rainfall is below 10 inches a year. Where rainfall is above 20 inches a year, the methods of farming in the humid belt will work most of the time.

Our present concern is with the land that lies between these two sectors, the land with the 10-20-inch rainfall belt, running west from a line drawn thru the middle of the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and down into Texas. This belt continues until it hits the desert or the mountains.

The annual amount of rainfall, of course, is not the only thing to measure. At what time of year does rainfall come? And how much is lost by what the Weather Bureau

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Private Planning

• "In America . . . the citizen . . . never thinks of soliciting the cooperation of the Government; but he publishes his plan, offers to execute it himself, courts the assistance of other individuals, and struggles manfully against all obstacles. Undoubtedly he is often less successful than the State might have been in his position; but in the end, the sum of these private undertakings far exceeds all that the Government could effect."

—Alexis de Tocqueville—1836

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PLANNING BY AMERICANS FOR A GREATER NATION · NPA · 1934 ·

calls "evapotranspiration?" In a 1957 study, the Weather Bureau notes that 20 inches of precipitation in Nebraska may be the equivalent of 30 inches in northeastern Texas.

Nor is this all. The hardest thing to overcome in this area is the wide variation and unpredictability of rainfall. For two or three years, a given area may have a rainfall like that of eastern Nebraska, and for the following five or six years, a rainfall only a little damper than that of the Mohave desert. And no one can predict the future course of the next weather cycle—only that variations will occur and that, in the long run, a known percentage of years will be disastrously dry.

Dean Roy E. Huffman of Montana State College says, "The most significant characteristic of the Great Plains region is the complete unpredictability of its climate and the extreme variation from year to year. . . . It may be a little startling to realize that, if the Great Plains were arid, they would have fewer and simpler problems than they do have as a semi-arid region. . . . A semi-arid region such as the Plains can and does vary from an arid to a humid climate and the human tendency is to settle and develop the region from the humid point of view."

THIS IS THE PROBLEM AREA. What should national policy be in regard to it? Let us go back to 1846. Perhaps we can get a picture of desirable goals if we try to think what might have been done if everybody at that time had been gifted with superhuman foresight.

If we were starting today with the physical conditions of 1846—minus the Indians and the buffalo—what would we want to do?

The first thing probably would be to do what we have, as of 1959, already done in part—that is to try to find out what the land is good for, what kind of treatment it will stand, and what kind of population it will support.

We would certainly say that a lot of the land should be kept in grass. In some way, we would keep dry land farmers from plowing up a lot of pasture land. Today, a report to the Great Plains Council by A. R. Aandahl of the Soil Conservation Service suggests that some 15 to 30 million acres of low-lying crop land might well be put to grass.

Even in 1846, early travelers who followed the Cimarron cut-off to Santa Fe reported that there was some blowing land that needed help.

But the plow is not the only enemy of this land. Overgrazing by sheep, goats, and cattle can ruin a range, too. So our imaginary 1846 council would presumably adopt some grazing regulations that would give grass a chance to survive. The same kind of grazing regulations should be used, of course, in mountain pastures in order to protect water sheds.

It might be noted that the invading Anglos were not the only sinners against the land in this area. Foothill pastures in New Mexico were denuded and damaged by Mexican herds of sheep and goats long before Kearney's Dragoons came to Santa Fe.

Our 1846 council would note the odds on wheat raising and try to decide what land should be kept in wheat. Today it is possible to determine the odds against the wheat farmer in different sections. The Weather Bureau notes that in some sections, you are likely to get a wheat crop five years out of ten. In another, the odds would be worse—three years out of ten. In a third—close to the humid belt—eight years out of ten would be probable.

If there were a regular ten-year wet and dry cycle, the problem would be much easier. Unfortunately, in a district that on the average has five good wheat years out of ten, the five good years may come in succession and the five bad years may follow. Or, still worse, the bad years may stretch out to eight, and the good years shrink to two, only to be followed by two bad years and then by eight good ones.

What kind of weather odds are worth taking on wheat? It probably depends on how badly the nation needs the crop. In wartime, we would take more chances than in peace.

Suppose that it seems desirable in the national interest to plant wheat on land where the rainfall prospects indicate a crop six years out of ten? What happens to the farmer in the bad years? Will he sell out to a new sucker in a wet year, or will he hold on through a series of dry years? And how long can he hold on without a crop?

This, too, would be a problem for our imaginary 1846 council.

So even without the bad habit learned after 1846, handling of this area would be difficult. Now, think of the difficulties of dealing today with a situation where too much land is in wheat, too much land is overgrazed, and too many farm people are hopefully trying to make a living.

TO DEAL WITH the problem today demands some increase in expert knowledge in this field. Agricultural college and USDA men in this area have done remarkable work in finding out what kind of farming will do best in special areas, but there are still some gaps in our information.

What we need primarily is a recognition of what our national goals should be in this area, a realization of how national policies and habits have damaged this part of the west, and a determination to use more drastic methods of improvement than most of us have been willing to advocate in the past.

The goals are fairly clear: more grass; more livestock; less wheat; and control over both wheat acreage and overgrazing.

This sounds simple. It isn't. Take, for instance, the apparently obvious proposal to shift wheat land into grass and beef.

Beef cattle need water as well as feed. Some of this potential pasture land is short of water for livestock. And the cycles of drought and wet affect grass as well as wheat. Reserves of feed must be held over in large supply in order to prevent the destruction of herds in dry seasons.

Nor does it always pay the individual farmer to shift from wheat to grass and beef. It may be good for the nation, but it may damage him. A Montana State College report indicates that with spring wheat prices at $1.90, a farmer on 12-bushel-an-acre land who changed to beef would need to get over $200 for each 400-pound feeder calf to come out even.

Also, the shift from wheat to beef takes time. Wheat land seeded to grass won't produce much feed for several years. Beef takes different equipment and skills than wheat.

How can we reconcile the needs of the nation—for soil conservation, grass, and beef—with the needs of the farmer to make a living?

And there is another major problem tied up with this one. This marginal land has more farmers than it would need under a soil conservation program. The next spell of dry weather will starve some of them out, as it has done in the past. One historian, A. M. Simons, describes the process: "Following times of occasional rainy season, the line of social advance rose and fell with rain and drought like a mighty tide beating against the wall of the Rockies. And every such wave left behind it a mass of human wreckage in the shape of broken fortunes, deserted farms and ruined homes."

That is what has happened. It is what will happen again unless plans are made to prevent it.

In the last two crop seasons, the rains have come again to the plains, and crops have been good. Some farmers have got back the value of the land in one crop. The temptation is strong to believe that the climate has, once more, changed for the better. Weather Bureau climatologists know, however, that the wet period is only temporary and that before long, drought and dust storms will revisit the Great Plains.

The records of two thousand years, written on the tree trunks of the Southwest, show that this will continue to be a land of sparse and irregular rainfall.

Drought can brutally move the surplus farmers off the land. Can intelligent planning find ways of getting these surplus farmers better nonfarm jobs and incomes?

That is a tall order. Yet no program of long-time improvement can take hold unless some farmers are given a chance to make a better living elsewhere. Some of these folks will be young ones who have just started and will be willing to make a move. Some will be older ones, bound to the land by habit and affection. Can both these groups be given a chance to do better?

AT THIS POINT in a discussion of the Great Plains, many are likely to say, "How on earth did we get into the trouble we're in?"

Don't blame the wheat farmer of this area. He got into the mess because of beliefs common to everybody, and because of policies which he did not establish.

First, there is a matter of popular delusions. In "A Plan for the Plains," C. F. Kraenzel of Montana State defines delusions as, "attitudes of mind which would destroy the plains, its resources and its people in the long run. Among the attitudes are the following: That man can conquer nature; that natural resources are inexhaustible; that habitual practices are the best; that the owner may do with the property as he likes . . . and that the individual must make his own adjustment."

Then there is our national policy. The nation treated semiarid lands as if they were humid lands. The Homestead Act made no sense at all in the west. J. W. Powell reported the true picture in 1878, but humid state legislators couldn't understand it. In World Wars I and II, the nation asked for more wheat and involved the semiarid lands in new disasters. Because dealing with semiarid lands calls for drastic novel action, policy makers have been inclined to look the other way and let the damage continue.

And finally, it is hard to back up. Plowing up pasture land is no trick. Any fool with a tractor can do it. But getting wheat land back into grass is harder. It takes time; it takes money; and it takes luck with weather. Such a program also takes the risk of leaving behind stranded farm families like former coal miners in areas where the coal is all gone.

We have talked about what we'd like to do, how we got that way, and how hard it is to do better. But no matter how hard, action is necessary. What action? The following suggestions are put forward as part, at least, of what a program for the Western Great Plains might be. They echo suggestions made by groups like the Great Plains Council, Resources for the Future, the State Colleges on the western plains, and the staff of the USDA. None of these organizations, of course, is to be blamed for the particular emphasis and phrasing of the following suggestions.

- Let the Federal government buy up 15 or 20 million acres of wheat land in this area, get it back to grass, and turn it over to the USDA for administration. We know this can be done because it has been done on a smaller scale. In the 1934-44 period, about six million acres of poor land, much of it in wheat, were taken over by the Federal government. Edward G. Grest of USDA reports on this project: "The lands selected had to be qualified as being sub-marginal or primarily unsuitable for cultivation. . . . This involved removing from private ownership land in farms not suited to cropland agriculture and not suitable for retention as a livestock operating headquarters, and the relocation of the occupants to better farms or to other situations to which the families were adapted. In most of these areas there were more farm families on the land than it could support even when using the land to the best advantage in the use for which it was adapted—i.e., grazing."

This land taken over by the Federal government was generally put into grass. It was administered with other government land as grazing units. Payments in lieu of taxes were made to local taxing bodies.

During the drought period of the fifties, this government land made a marked contrast to similar land left in private hands. Use as range, plus limited grazing, made some of these patches of Federal lands look like oases in the desert.

The nation is fortunate to have this experience in a pilot project. We can avoid some earlier mistakes in a larger program. For instance, the government has spent too little in improving water and other facilities on this land. Methods of rationing leases among ranchers could be greatly improved.

• Expand the present conservation reserve, but put emphasis on a new contract which would keep land out of cultivation until the Secretary of Agriculture released it. The present conservation reserve provides contracts for three, five, and ten years. But at the end of the contract, anything can happen.

It is true that many western farmers now intend to keep land in grass that has been taken out of wheat by the conservation reserve. That is, at least, their present intention. No one knows what wet years and another wheat boom might do to these resolutions.

It should be noted that the conservation reserve, even in its present short time form, doesn't balance land put under the plow since 1944. In Corson County, South Dakota, for instance, crop land increased by 82,399 acres in this period, but the conservation reserve, in 1959, totals only 34,608. In Grant County, Kansas, crop acreage went up 35,642 acres, but the conservation reserve total, in 1959, was only 12,000 acres. From many angles, this is a good showing and speaks well for ASC enterprise. But it also shows that the conservation reserve, on its present temporary basis, isn't offsetting much of the recent increases in crop land.

• Get more of this land out of wheat by other arrangements with present owners. One suggestion is for the government to buy "easements" by which the owner would sell to the government the right to plow up the land in question. For other uses, the land would still be the property of the farmer, although some control of overgrazing might be added. This device has the advantage of interfering as little as possible with private management. Another proposal is to have mixed government and private corporations buy land and let local interests administer it, but under careful supervision.

• Established subsidies and liberal loans to help the shift from wheat to beef. It seems clear that many wheat farmers would lose money in a shift to grass and beef, even though this shift is desirable for the country. Some

(continued on page 7)

—The People of NPA—

James A. Brownlow

An active member of the trade union movement for over 40 years, James A. Brownlow, member of NPA's Labor Committee, has contributed his experiences as a labor leader to numerous union activities.

Born in Naugatuck, Connecticut, Mr. Brownlow moved to Denver as a young man, and there began his successful career in labor leadership. He became president of the Denver Building Trades Council, and was a member of the Denver Housing Authority. He was also a former manager of Denver's Municipal Airport, and a former business manager of Local Union No. 3, Plumbers and Steamfitters of Denver of which he is still a member. He has been a member of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipe Fitting Industry of the United States and Canada for 40 years.

In 1937 he became Secretary-Treasurer of Colorado's State Federation of Labor and from 1932-1934 was elected to the House of Representatives of the State of Colorado. During World War II, he was a labor member of the National War Labor Board, representing the AFL.

On June 1, 1950, Mr. Brownlow became President of the Metal Trades Department of the AFL-CIO, a position which he presently holds. Since 1950, he has also served as a labor member of the Federal Committee on Apprenticeship of the United States Department of Labor, a labor member of the Administrator's Advisory Committee for Vocational Rehabilitation of the Veterans Administration, and was an alternate to the Conference of National Organizations for President Meany of the AFL-CIO.

He presently holds two labor advisory positions in the field of nuclear energy. He is a member of the AFL-CIO Executive Council on Atomic Energy Subcommittee, and AFL-CIO member on the Committee on Nuclear Power, U. S. Coast Guard.

Economic Plan and Action

The critical issues, domestic and international, which have a significant bearing on our economic welfare, are the subject of a Harper publication released May 27, *Economic Plan and Action.*

The author Charlton Ogburn, lawyer, counsel of NPA for fifteen years, and a member of NPA's Board of Trustees since 1948, sketches a picture of the outstanding economic events which have taken place since World War II, within a framework of NPA reports and studies. He draws upon NPA reports to illustrate how the United States has dealt with economic problems ranging from capital exports and surplus farm commodities, to the operation of a growing federal budget and the use of nuclear energy.

This book, which provides a record of many of the activities of NPA during the past twelve years, will be of special interest to not only those who are members of NPA, but also to those persons who have an interest in the problems of the American economy since World War II.

The scope of economic history covered in the 304 pages is a partial inventory of NPA reports, and includes a discussion of the Full Employment Act of 1946. Mr. Ogburn cites that as early as the spring of 1943, NPA had recognized the need for the maintenance of full employment at the end of the war. A Joint Statement adopted and issued at this time by the Board of Trustees, Agriculture, Business, and Labor Committees stated, "We must prepare now for full and continuing employment under a peacetime economy."

In discussing the export of U. S. capital in reference to the dollar gap and technical and foreign economic aid, Mr. Ogburn refers to the recommendations made in the NPA publications, *Promoting United States Private Investment Abroad, The Political Economy of American Foreign Policy,* and to the recommendations of the International Committee recommending a development loan fund program. He also refers to an NPA study for the Special Committee of the United States Senate on the direct and indirect impact of foreign aid on the domestic economy since World War II, and its possible impact in the future, and the *Technical Cooperation in Latin America* series.

Commenting on the U. S. farm surplus problem, Mr. Ogburn points out that in December 1955, NPA issued a Joint Statement on U. S. farm policy stating that "the nation needs to work toward at least three objectives through a sensible farm policy." The three objectives stipulated were: an adequate supply of the right kind of farm products for domestic and international use; maintenance of soil fertility so as to meet the needs of an expanding population; and the maintenance of farm income on a level comparable with nonfarm groups, and high enough to induce skilled operators to stay on the farms.

Other NPA studies cited by Mr. Ogburn on various phases of the farm problem include, *The Economy of the American People,* and the NPA special report for the United States Senate Special Committee on agricultural surplus disposal abroad.

Mr. Ogburn, noting that it has been the policy of the U. S. government, since the end of the War, to encourage private investment by Americans abroad, especially in underdeveloped countries, reviews the NPA series, *United States Business Performance Abroad.* In this series a number of American companies in underdeveloped countries were examined to see how they contributed to the development of the host country, and how they were regarded by the native citizens and government. Mr. Ogburn summarizes the activities of *Sears, Roebuck in Mexico, W. R. Grace & Co. in Peru, The Philippine American Life Insurance Company, The Creole Petroleum Corporation in Venezuela, The Firestone Operations in Liberia, Stanvac in Indonesia,* and *United Fruit in Latin America.*

In his review of organized labor, Mr. Ogburn draws upon the NPA Labor Committee study, *Trade Unions and Democracy—A Comparative Study of U. S., French, Italian, and West German Unions.* This study attributes the rapid growth of union membership in the past twenty years to the ability of the unions to achieve a generally higher standard of living for workers. In conclusion, Mr. Ogburn states, the factors which have promoted industrial peace, are "The economic thinking and practices of most advanced management groups are now based on recognition of the advantages of full employment, social security, low unit cost, greater purchasing power, and increased productivity as the foundation for an expanding high-wage economy."

Other phases of U. S. economic activity covered in this book include "The Productive Uses of Nuclear Energy," "Foreign Economic Policy," "Collective Bargaining," "The Changing Economy of the American People," "Dispersal of Industry," and "The Common Defense."

In his concluding chapter, "Social Effects of Economic Development," Mr. Ogburn points out some of the effects which the standard of living increase will have on the American way of life. The increase in incomes, he notes

has dealt a blow to the doctrines of socialism and communism as contentment with economic status does not provide the necessary fertile soil for these doctrines to take root. This contentment, he adds, has also resulted in a diminishing number of recruits for liberal or progressive parties. In surburbia, however, states Mr. Ogburn, contentment probably stems from the newly raised incomes and prospects of future raises rather than satisfaction with the present level of a stationary income.

(*Economic Plan and Action,* Charlton Ogburn, Harper & Brothers, New York: 1959, 304 pp. $4.75. Available to NPA Members at 25% discount if ordered through *Looking Ahead.*)

Education for Tomorrow's Economic Challenges

"Education, which at one time provided an opportunity for the scholar to synthesize his knowledge . . . has succumbed to the tendency to specialize," states Mr. M. L. Frankel, Director of the Joint Council of Economic Education in his preface to the proceedings of a Joint Council workshop. This workshop, which was held last summer on "The Impact of Contemporary Scientific and Technological Developments on the American Economy," was in recognition of the undesirable effects of this splintering of knowledge. Selected science and social studies teachers from 33 high schools throughout the United States were brought together to consider ways in which each could reinforce the other in his educational program.

The recently published collection of papers from this conference, *The American Economy: An Appraisal of Its Social Goals and the Impact of Science and Technology,* opens with a discussion of the major goals of the American economy: economic growth; stability; security; freedom; and justice. Each goal is the subject of a paper by a well-known economist.

Also included in the study are a series of discussions on up-to-the-minute scientific and technological developments in the areas of energy, health, automation, space exploration, and food, and an evaluation of the economic implications of each of these developments.

The booklet contains an appendix listing speakers, participants, staff members, and organizations which contributed materials for the project. An additional volume of teaching units incorporating the knowledge gained through the project, prepared and classroom-tested by the participating teachers will be published next year.

(*The American Economy: An Appraisal of Its Social Goals and the Impact of Science and Technology,* Joint Council on Economic Education, New York: 1959, 162 pp.)

An Analysis

Lessons of the Recessions

An analysis of the experience of the three postwar recessions—1948-49, 1953-54, and 1957-58—"as a lesson from which the United States can draw valuable practical conclusions," was recently published by the Public Affairs Institute. This analysis, *Lessons of the Recessions,* by W. S. and E. S. Woytinsky, concludes that "Economic progress in the United States has been losing momentum in recent years. The rate of growth of per capita real income has sunk dangerously low and is threatened by new setbacks." The report estimates that the three recessions meant a direct loss in national product of $113 billion. The indirect loss, during this twelve-year period, of retarded economic growth is estimated by the authors to have reached $300 billion.

The foreword to this study by Dewey Anderson, Executive Director of the PAI, states, one can conclude from the facts presented by the authors that, "We do not need to suffer a decline in economic progress. We can get an annual growth rate of 5 percent GNP or more. But to do so, we must prevent the occurrence of recession, while maintaining the employment of our labor force, using an expanding plant and equipment. Only by interlocking these forces can we meet the demands of a growing population and the needs of our free world allies."

It can also be concluded, states Mr. Anderson that in expanding our GNP, we do not need to fear inflation, nor do we need fear deflation, if we take the necessary steps to prevent more recessions.

The authors state that although each new recession may be brief and appear mild, the cumulative effect of the postwar recession setbacks "has been to hold the nation back at a time when it needs all its dynamism and vigor."

To combat a reoccurance of a new recession, the authors propose a seven-point program "which will prevent new recessions or stop them in their earliest phase." These points include: "a Congressional Committee to . . . study . . . the character and causes of postwar recessions and their impact on the economy;" amendment of the Employment Act of 1946 so as to engage the services of the Council of Economic advisers in an antirecession campaign; use, as an antirecession measure, "the strengthening of existing defenses to insure normal income flow to various groups of the population;" and the establishment of "measures to offset contraction in economic activities in the private sector through simultaneous expansion of the public sector of the economy."

(*Lessons of the Recessions,* W. S. and E. S. Woytinsky, Public Affairs Institute, Washington, D. C.: 1959, 110 pp. $2.00.)

The Central City

The rapid economic changes leading to the present deterioration of the nation's great central cities are described and analyzed in a recent CED publication, *The Changing Economic Function of the Central City.*

The absolute decline in population, jobs, values, and economic activities in the older central cities and the failure to find new economic functions for the areas between downtown and the suburbs that are coming to be known as the grey belt are problems highlighted by the study. At the same time, the study calls attention to new or changing economic functions that are best performed within the central city and should not be moved to the suburbs.

The author, Dr. Raymond Vernon, director of the New York Metropolitan Region Study, examines the costs of these central cities, which stem from congestion, urban decay, the "fiscal incapacities" of local governments, and the "insatiable demands" for schools, water and sewage plants, and other public utilities. He sees a bleak future for the central city as it has existed, but finds cause for optimism if adjustment to the many economic changes is realistically approached.

Dr. Vernon contrasts the narrowing use of the central city with the expanding industrial use of the suburbs. Part of the sharp distinction which he finds between the two areas may be described in economic terms and part is evidenced in physical decay. All of it offers a "challenge in social organization," states Dr. Vernon.

In examining costs of doing business in the central city, Dr. Vernon states, "on the whole . . . one sees little or nothing in the labor-cost picture which makes the central city attractive as a place for doing business, as compared with its suburbs." However, he states, the central city has "some slight advantage for the collection of certain types of labor force," especially office workers. Thus, he sees the central city losing large manufacturing and becoming more and more like Manhattan—an island of office workers.

Dr. Vernon also finds that large firms which have moved to the suburbs have not necessarily acquired a "significant rental savings" and predicts that certain big companies, such as insurance firms, will remain in the central cities.

Beyond the central business district, but within the confines of the central city, lies the grey belt. Dr. Vernon sees a long-run decline in the intensive use of this space, but foresees two possible uses for the grey belt: "that middle-income families may decide to return to the cities in great numbers; or that subsidized governmental intervention, such as low income housing or open-space projects, may be expanded to such levels as to constitute a significant space-using force." The first, he concludes, would be contrary to all historical trends, based on sociological forces; the second would demand a larger scale of governmental intervention than ever known before. (*The Changing Economic Function of the Central City,* Raymond Vernon, Committee for Economic Development, New York: 1959.)

(Continued from page 4)

helpful devices can be worked out to make it worthwhile for competent farmers to make this change.

- Change the Federal wheat program to fit the realities of climate. Make allottments in terms of production, not acreage, and permit extra bushels to be raised in good years to be kept in reserve for bad years. Some western wheat men also point out that price supports might well be given only to land where wheat is the only possible crop and taken away from humid land where farmers can substitute other crops for wheat.

- Provide help in training and relocating farmers who sell land to the government or who, for other reasons, find farming opportunities unfavorable in this area. This area will support fewer farmers than it has now, but in more comfort and security, provided some necessary changes are made in cropping and management. But it will not support as many farmers as it now has.

Young people growing up on farms in this area should be given both vocational training and vocational guidance toward nonfarm jobs. Older farmers who wish to leave need special help, both in training and help in getting located in a new spot. The shift for older farmers is bound to be painful, although not as painful as being wrecked by drought.

Small towns have a problem too. If farm population is cut down, business men in many towns fear that trade volume will shrink. It is possible, of course, that fewer farmers, on better farms, may have more money to spend over a ten-year period than farmers now have on the present boom and bust basis.

Where power and water supplies permit, minor industrial developments may be possible in some of these small towns. With a more stable farm income and a possibility of industrial development, the small towns in this area might improve their position considerably even though farm population goes down.

Some of these difficulties are summed up by an economist in this area who writes: "Localized economic and social institutions are . . . definitely important, perhaps of supreme importance. The policy of adjustment stands very little chance of success in a democracy if property rights, existing government institutions (as roads, county lines, state lines, schools, courthouses, etc.) and existing social institutions are ignored. It is not to say that these things are inviolable but they can only be cast aside or modified at a cost."

Change—even change in the right direction—is costly for many. Any program for the western Great Plains will have to include ways of easing the shift for town people as well as for farmers.

These worries of town people create another hazard for helpful action in this area. Instead of adding to the acres under Federal control, some groups urge sale of land already owned by the government. Such action, unless rules for sensible use of land were included in the sales contract, would probably result in more plowing up of grass, more overgrazing, and more trouble.

This problem of the western Great Plains is as much a human problem as an economic problem. Quite plainly, we have more land in wheat than we need. Every means should be taken to whittle down production. This western lands program goes along with the national effort to cut down wheat acreage. It fits, too, into the need for long-time conservation programs. But it also gives us some hope of dealing with the human problem in the area, of stopping the tragic cycle of boom and bust, of rain and drought, of rushing out hopefully to new land and of being pushed back, broken, from lands barren and dust blown.

The foregoing is not by any means a complete program for the western Great Plains. But it does indicate where a considerable start can be made. Revival of the land-buying program of the 30's plus expansion and revision of the conservative reserve, plus training and guidance for farmers who quit farming, are the important items. These can contribute greatly to long-time conservation of soil, to reduction of wheat surpluses, and to making a better life for the people on this land.

Correction

A section of Frederick M. Stearn's article, "Imbalance in Military Preparedness," which appeared in Volume 7, No. 2, March 1959, Looking Ahead, *was inadvertently printed out of sequence.*

The portion beginning with the words, "missions. It would require merely the creation . . ." *(which begins on the sixth line of the paragraph beginning* "Firepower and mobility . . ." *on page 5), and ending with the words* "guide its part-time . . ." *(which appears on the next to last line of the page), should be transposed with the section immediately following which begins with the words* "army in the first phase . . ." *and ends with the words* "weapons to their proper roles and . . ." *(on line 10 of the paragraph beginning* "Progress would seem" *on page 6). The corrected version will then start as follows.* "Nor can they replace heavy losses like those suffered by the United States army in the first phase of the Korean war . . ."; *and after the transposed section will continue* "weapons and their proper roles and missions. It would require merely the creation of vast. . . ."

Single corrected reprints of this article are available on request.

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